

PROPOSED USE OF THE PLENARY POWERS TO DETERMINE FOR THE
GENERIC NAME "VARUNA" MILNE EDWARDS (H.), 1830 (CLASS
CRUSTACEA, ORDER DECAPODA) A GENDER IN HARMONY WITH
ACCUSTOMED USAGE

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(Commission's reference : Z.N.(S.) 943)

The purpose of the present application is to ask the Commission to use its Plenary Powers for the purpose of designating for the generic name *Varuna* Milne Edwards, 1830 (Class Crustacea, Order Decapoda) a gender in harmony with accustomed usage. This generic name was placed on the *Official List of Generic Names in Zoology* by the Ruling given in *Opinion* 85. It is necessary therefore that an appropriate gender should be attributed to this name as soon as possible, in order that the preparation of the *Official List* for publication in book-form may not be held up on this account. The facts of this case are set out below.

2. The word "Varuna" is a non-Classical word and by reason of its "-a" termination, it was allotted a feminine gender by Mr. F. J. Lelievre in his report on genders, on the analogy of Latin nouns belonging to the first declension. The literature shows that from Milne Edwards onwards, authors have treated the generic name *Varuna* as being feminine in gender.

3. Professor H. Boschma (*Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, Leiden, The Netherlands*), while agreeing that it was desirable that the feminine gender should be attributed to this name in view of the fact that it is always treated as being of that gender, was the first to point out that this word should probably be treated as being masculine in gender, it being likely that, in naming this crab, Milne Edwards selected for its name "the name of the god of the waters, the Indian Neptune of Hindoo mythology" (letter dated 16th February 1955). Reference to Milne Edwards's original description fully bears out Professor Boschma's hypothesis, for in that description Milne Edwards wrote: "Le nom de Varuna, par lequel nous le designons génériquement, est celui de l'un des genies des eaux dans la mythologie indienne." It is clear therefore that under the *Règles* this generic name is masculine in gender.

4. I have consulted both Dr. A. Fenner Chace (*United States National Museum, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.*) and Dr. Isobel Gordon (*British Museum (Natural History), London*) on this case. Dr. Chace, while stating that it seems to matter little which gender is assigned to it, says that this name

"would be more readily acceptable to all carcinologists if it is treated as feminine" (letter of 22nd March 1955). Dr. Gordon replied (12th April 1955) that, in her opinion, "*Varuna* should be retained as feminine. Even Milne Edwards used the combination *Varuna litterata* from the start."

5. In the circumstances, I recommend that, either under the normal Plenary Powers procedure or under those Powers through the modified procedure recommended in Application Z.N.(S.) 938, the Commission should direct that the generic name *Varuna* Milne Edwards (H.), 1830, be treated as being of the feminine gender.

COMMENT ON MR. A. E. ELLIS' PROPOSED USE OF THE PLENARY
POWERS TO PRESERVE THE GENERIC NAME "HELICELLA"
FERUSSAC, 1821 (CLASS GASTROPODA) FOR USE IN ITS
ACCUSTOMED SENSE

By LOTHAR FORCART

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(Commission's reference : Z.N.(S.) 214)

(For Mr. Ellis' application, see 1954, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 9(10) : 304—308))

(Extract from a letter dated 28th March 1955 from Dr. Forcart to Mr. A. E. Ellis
(Epsom College, Epsom, Surrey, England))

On pages 307 and 308, you supposed Schlesch, 1927 (*Korresp. Bl. Naturf.-Ver. Riga* 59 : 116) to be the author of HELICELLINAE. Schlesch is not the author of this subfamily, but Hesse in 1926 in "Beiträge zur genaueren Kenntnis der Subfamilie Helicellinae" (*Arch. Moll.* 58(3) : 115, published 1st May 1926).